

Working Together

Issue Nine

Winter 2001 - 2002

Putting
Veterans

First

in everything
we do,
**working
together** to
exceed their
expectations.

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*Our Vision for the Future.....
Providing our nations veterans with
the highest quality of health care.*

A Message from the Director

*Dear Fellow Employees, Volunteers,
Veterans and Friends of the VA,*

In this Winter Issue of our **Working Together** publication, I would like to discuss the vision of the Leadership Board for the VA Pittsburgh. Our vision is clear... we will remain committed to providing our veterans with the highest quality of care that can be found anywhere, while we expand clinical programs and improve access and patient satisfaction.

On pages 4 and 5 of this issue our strategic objectives for the next year are outlined. These objectives are ambitious and aggressive, and will require the dedication and commitment of all staff members. The accomplishment of these objectives will involve the substantial increase in



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the use of information technology, the use of technology in the delivery of health care, and continued enhancements to our inpatient and outpatient care areas. We also must continue to find new and creative ways to make health care more accessible to more veterans who live in outlying areas and our four spoke hospitals.

Our Strategic Plan includes numerous renovation and construction projects and a substantial investment in information technology and high tech equipment. We will continue to expand in these areas with the objective of delivering the most up to date technologically advanced healthcare that can be found in any VA facility. Updates on these initiatives will continue to be highlighted in future issues of this publication. The goal to far exceed community standards for the Prevention Indexes and Chronic Disease Guidelines and to reduce waits and delays for clinic appointments continues to be among our highest priorities.

The future will bring a critical need to expand the market penetration and to serve more veterans. Our plan to accomplish this will involve the enhancement of quality, access, the satisfaction of our veterans and to continue to find ways to effectively manage our resources and continue to increase third party insurance collections.

This Winter issue of **Working Together** will present a feature on our 2002 Strategic Goals, Employee Appreciation Week activities, Designation as a National Renal Transplant Center, and "Performance vital signs". It also spotlights the many outstanding achievements and awards that our staff has received in the past quarter.



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Director

Terry Gerigk
Associate Director

Rajiv Jain, MD
Chief of Staff

The VA Pittsburgh Working Together is published for the employees, volunteers, patients, and friends of the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System.

To submit articles, editorials, letters, or story ideas for possible inclusion, please contact David Cowgill at 412-688-6224.

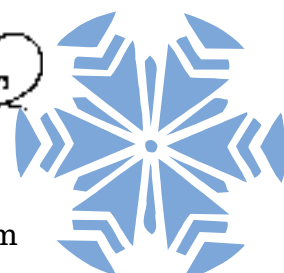
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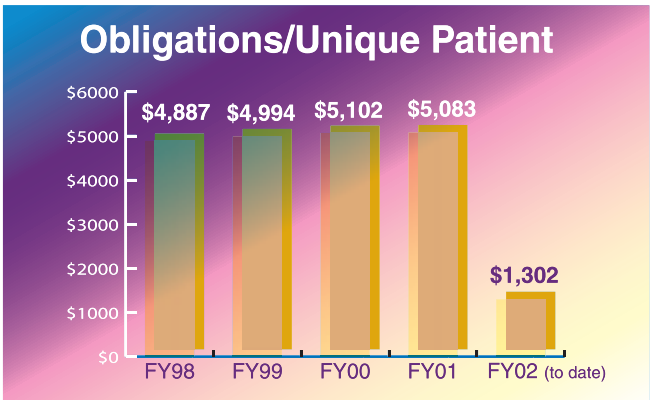
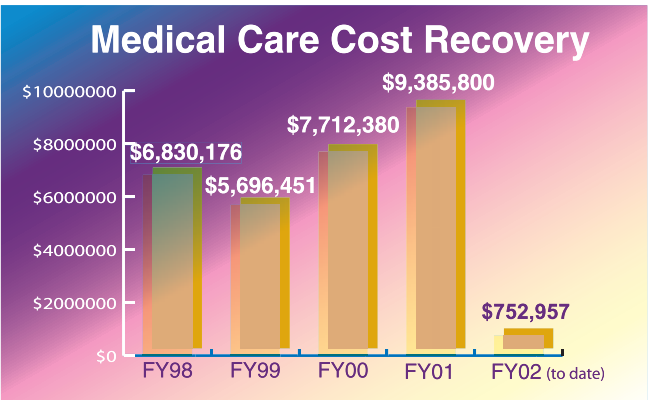
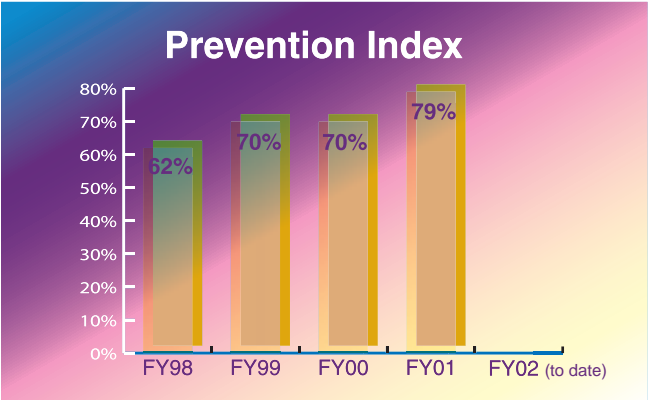
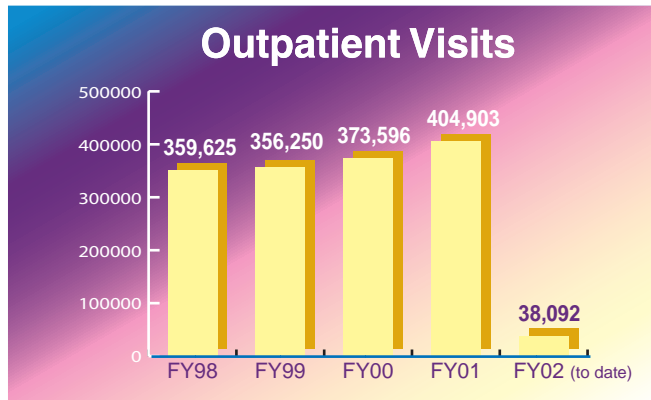
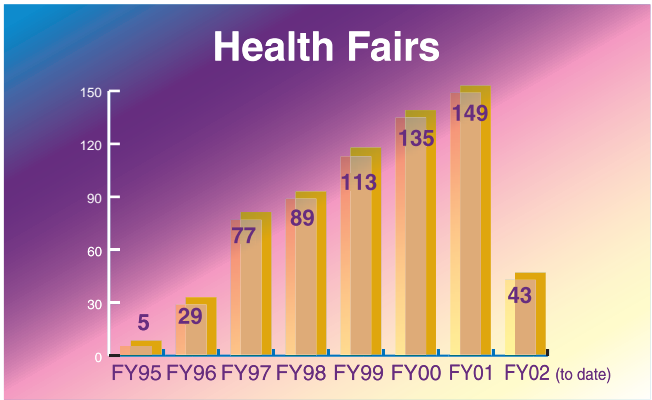
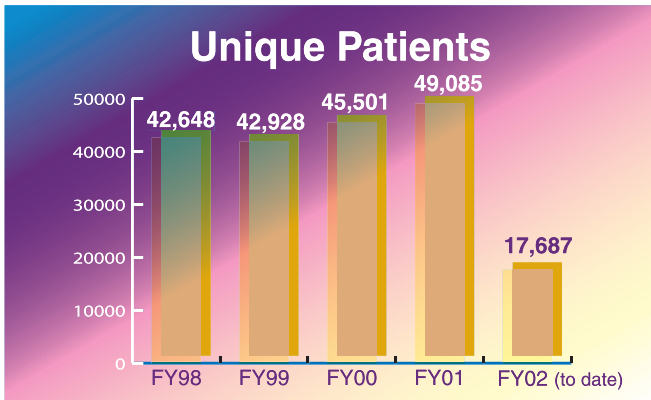
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Michael E. Moreland
Director/CEO
VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System



Performance Vital Signs



VAPHS Becomes a National Kidney Transplant Center

The VAPHS was designated as a National Kidney Transplant Center in October 2001.

We will officially be assigned patients for evaluation work-up in January 2002 and anticipate the first Renal Transplant to be performed in early 2002. There are currently only three other VA Renal Transplant centers in the United States, - Portland, Iowa City, and Tennessee.



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Strategic Goals FY 2002



Quality Enhancements

- Far exceed the community standard for the Clinical Guidelines Index (CGI) and Prevention Indexes (PI) to reach the 85-95% level
- Continue to recruit nationally & internationally recognized clinical leaders
- Further implement the computerized medical records Computerized Patient Record System (CPRS) through
 - utilization of the consult and progress note packages
 - expanded use of GUI in CBOC's
 - development and implementation of consult referral
- Develop focused research proposals for Hepatitis C, HIV and nosocomial infection prevention
- Implement the health services research program
- Begin construction to address life safety deficiencies
- Assure continued research compliance
- Pursue implementation of filmless radiology system
- Develop palliative care programs
- Implement renal transplant program
- Explore the potential of VAPHS as a lead for a VA Cooperative Studies Program



Access Enhancements

- Expand adult day health care
- Provide services to 5% more veterans
- Meet the VA standard for waits and delays
- Increase the number of patients treated in HBPC and the home-maker/home health aid program by 25%
- Improve behavioral health care of nursing homepts.
- Expand ambulatory care exam room space at all 3 divisions
- Target marketing to veterans in priority groups 1-5
- Complete Heinz oxygen project

Costs and Efficiencies

- Develop capacity to treat more veterans by reducing the cost per veteran treated
- Increase third party collections
- Implement advanced tray delivery at Heinz
- Reduce employee injuries and related costs
- Increase same day surgeries
- Increase telemetry beds
- Assure that all enrollees are appropriately and fully vested

Veteran Satisfaction Enhancements

- Meet or exceed the national customer service satisfaction goal
- Complete construction to enhance a psychiatric treatment floor at Highland Drive
- Complete \$3.5 million lab renovation at University Drive
- Reduce provider cancellation of clinics
- Continue to pursue funding for major construction project for parking and ambulatory care at University Drive



Workforce Development

- Continue to invest in staff education
- Improve employee recognition
- Explore opportunities for involvement with Job Corps
- Implement supervisory training
- Explore opportunities for succession planning

Dear Sir,

I am writing to you in regard to a surgery that was performed yesterday in your hospital. My good friend, Donald was taken to our local hospital on June 11 with the symptoms of a kidney stone. For some unknown reason the doctor there ordered a CT scan. Not only did they see the kidney stone, but thankfully it revealed an adrenal mass in relatively early stages. Our emergency room called your facility and setup an appointment in Urology for the next day. By the Grace of God, we were seen by Dr. Michael Franks. I want to commend you on having a man with his skill and knowledge working in your facility. He has to be the kindest and most caring Doctor we have ever encountered in our lives. His diagnosis was 100% correct. Yesterday, July 30, Dr. Franks and another Doctor, whose name I did not get unfortunately, removed the tumor and Don is now in your Surgical Intensive Care Unit. As of tonight he is stable and everything looks promising as to his recovery. The Pathologist's results are not in yet but Dr. Franks is optimistic. I have never in my life been treated as kindly as we were by Dr. Franks. His knowledge, skill, concern and "above and beyond the call of duty" attitude I feel are the reason Don is still alive tonight. Everything he told us is exactly what was or would happen. His gentle "bedside manner" was such a support to us when we were so afraid ...and he always made us feel as if he had all the time in the world for our questions. I could go on and on but I do not want to compromise your time. Again I commend your facility for having Dr. Franks on your staff. In my heart and in my mind I will always believe that had it not been for him we would not have our precious Don with us today. Again, I, and his three children thank you from the bottom of our hearts for hiring Dr. Michael Franks.

Sincerely,

Kim Valasek, Donnie, Genesee and Dan (Beer)

Mail Bag



Dear Mr. Barilich:

I am the United Voluntary Service Representative at the Aspinwall Veterans Hospital. I wanted to tell you about an extraordinary event that I witnessed on June 28, 2001. Jim Cristillo, Bill Exler (a UVS Deputy), and I took 10 hospitalized veterans to a baseball game at the New PNC Park. We had 9 volunteers helping us get the guys out of the hospital and into the stadium and their seats.

Of all the events that I have been to at the hospital, this one had the most extraordinary effect on our veterans. They got totally lost in the game, they were transported to a different time and the looks on their faces said it all. For a brief few hours they forgot about their pain, their disabilities and really enjoyed themselves. They came alive with excitement. We had, indeed, provided some wonderful medicine.

Some of the guys danced with their hands when the music came on and they didn't care who saw them because they were having a great time. Others struggled to get up for the Seventh Inning Stretch like they did when they were younger. As I watched their faces I realized! we provided what could be the last live baseball they will ever see, and I felt grateful and humble to be involved. I also realized that we provided something their relatives and friends couldn't do anymore; take them out to a ball game or anywhere else for that matter.

Of course, we bought them hot dogs and some cold beverages and Jimmy had baseballs and Pirate Hats and prizes. And all of that added to the charm of the festivities. But nothing, nothing that I've seen done in the hospital has nearly the same therapeutic effect as a simple trip to see a baseball game, eat a hot dog, and drink a cold beverage.

I wanted to thank you for creating an environment where I can make a difference. I'll never forget what I saw on the veterans' faces and I thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

Sincerely, Connie

Dear Mr. Moreland,

This letter is to inform you of the experience my family had at your hospital the week of April 1, 2001. Our loved one, James, was admitted on April 1, 2001 and was placed on the seventh floor. At which time he was diagnosed with pneumonia.

For the past four years, he had been treated for Progressive Supranuclear Palsy, a condition in which there is no cure. My family was informed at the beginning that if he ever contracted pneumonia he would not survive. When he was diagnosed with pneumonia we understood what the end outcome would be and it was very difficult for our family to prepare for.

The extra effort that was exhibited by your staff deserves more than a mere thank you. Each and everyone of them was totally committed to their jobs, whether it was the nurses, doctors, aids, cleaning people, their kindness was so appreciated in our time of need. They all knew it was a matter of a few days and we would lose our family member. Not only were they dedicated to providing him with the best treatment and making him comfortable, their kindness and attention to our family was more than what any patient would expect. We stayed around the clock at his bedside and the staff not only gave us wash clothes, blankets, pillows, toothpaste but even provided my mother with a chair that turned into a sleeping bed.

The loyalty and excellent attitude of your staff reflects on the hospital as a whole, from the administrators right down to the individuals on each floor. They truly care and are an affectionate group of respected employees.

We truly appreciate all their efforts.

The Family of James F. Spiering

Spotlight on

**John E. Barilich,
MSW, MBA**

John E. Barilich, MSW, MBA has recently been selected as the 2001 VA Social Worker of the Year.

Mr. Barilich will receive this prestigious award at the Uniformed Services Social Work conference in San Diego on January 27, 2002.

Mr. Barilich is the Social Work Executive for the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System. He is also the Site Manager for the H. John Heinz, III VA Progressive Care Center; Vice President, Information Management Service Line and the Network 4 Homeless Coordinator. Mr. Barilich received his bachelor's degree from the University of Notre Dame in 1971. He graduated in 1974 from Indiana University with his Master's in Social Work. He also received his MBA from the University of Pittsburgh, Katz Graduate School of Business in 1999. Mr. Barilich is also a graduate of Gestalt Institute of Chicago's post-graduate training program in Gestalt Therapy.

Mr. Barilich began his VA career in 1975 at the North Chicago VAMC. He also worked at the Danville, Indianapolis, and Dallas VAMCs prior to his appointment



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in April, 1993 as the Chief of Social Work Service at the Highland Drive VAMC. Mr. Barilich and his family reside in the North Hills.

Congratulations

Employees with 20 years or more of service! The employees listed have reached a benchmark in their years of government service during the period June 2001 - September 2001

Frank W. Santucci	Behavioral Health	40
Patricia A. Bertone	Patient Care Services	30
Charlotte M. Foster	Patient Care Services	30
Ann Q. Trageser	Clinical Support	30
Stephen C. Baker	Facilities Management	25
Dennis E. Orcutt	Patient Care Services	25
Gilbert Smith	Facilities Management	25
Harry M. Weiss	Community Based Care	25
Francis A. Balog	Clinical Support	20
Monearl Castaphey	Patient Care Services	20
William H. Fields	Patient Care Services	20
Rhonda J. Johnson	Clinical Support	20
George L. Klingensmith	Patient Care Services	20
Catherine V. Knight	Patient Care Services	20
Samuel J. Love III	Facilities Management	20
Gloria J. Moore	Patient Care Services	20
David E. Sanders	Business Services	20
Grant L. Scott	Facilities Management	20
Joan P. Tadler	Critical Care	20
Robert L. Tomlinson	Clinical Support	20
Cheryl A. Vespa	Facilities Management	20



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